

[20 April, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

Protecting agriculture

3821. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have approved a proposal to provide safeguards to protect domestic agriculture from a surge in imports, while seeking to eliminate import subsidies given by developed nations under the WTO regime; and

(b) if so, what are the details of this proposal and its impact on the plight of Indian farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) In its initial negotiating proposals, submitted to the WTO, in January, 2001, as mandated by Article 20 of the Agreement, India has demanded separate safeguard measures on the lines of the Special Safeguard (SSG) including a provision for imposition of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) in the event of a surge in imports or a decline in international prices, as a special and differential (S&D) measure. India has also demanded elimination of export subsidies by the developed countries, with a view to ensuring its food security and taking care of its livelihood concerns. In order to regulate the indiscriminate imports of agricultural commodities, the Agreement on Agriculture already provides for suitable calibration of the applied rates thereon within the bound rates and initiation of trade remedial measures including anti-dumping action, imposition of countervailing action or safeguard action under specific circumstances provided under the Agreement. The elimination of export subsidies by the developed countries and the separate safeguard measures demanded by the country in its negotiating proposals will further insulate the domestic farmers against the surge of subsidized and indiscriminate imports of agricultural products into the country.